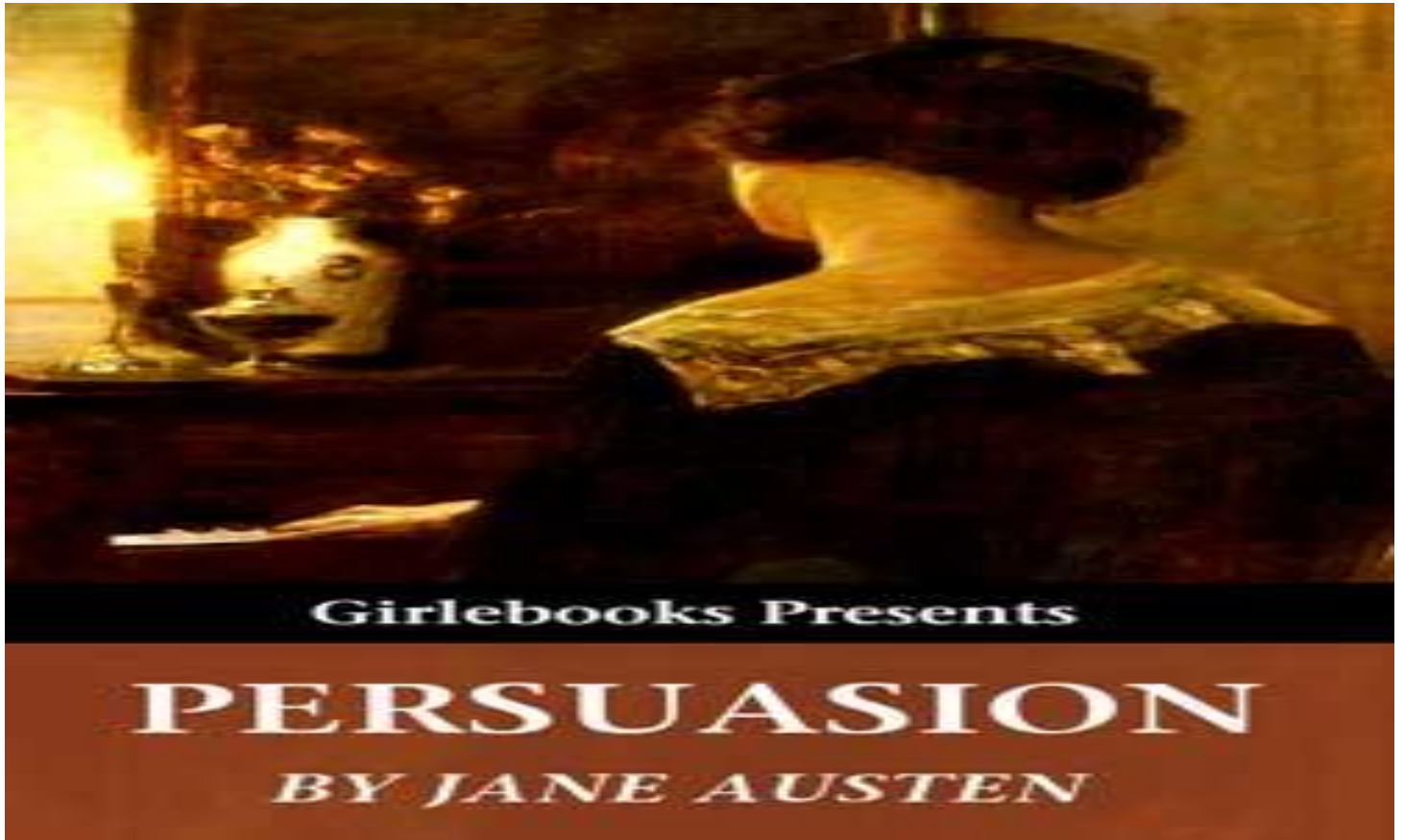




Context

Through her piercing social observation and subtly subversive style, Jane Austen drew from ordinary circumstances to produce extraordinary works of English literature. Known by many as a novelist who focuses on marriage plots and happy endings, Austen's works can more deeply be understood to be a study of the complex class and gender relations which underscored early-nineteenth century English middle-class society.

Born on December 16, 1775 in Steventon, England, Jane Austen was the seventh of eight children of George and Cassandra Leigh Austen. George Austen, born of the gentleman-farmer class, appreciated education and chose to study theology at Oxford. There he met Cassandra Leigh, who would become his wife. Though personally they had much in common, Cassandra's titled relations thought she was of a higher social status than George. Nevertheless, in 1764, they chose to marry and had eight children in quick succession: six boys and two girls.

As rector of the parish in Steventon, George Austen instilled in his children respect for God, manners, and propriety. Yet the burden of so many children meant that money was tight for the Austen family. In debt, they continued to live frugally and George took a second job tutoring pupils out of their home. Education and learning were highly valued in the Austen home and Jane quickly imbibed a love for reading.

Both Jane and her sister Cassandra were mostly educated at home, though they spent a short period of time at Abbey School. Jane's relationship with her sister was perhaps the strongest connection which existed in her life. Her numerous letters to and from Cassandra provide the basis for much of the knowledge Austen scholars have gleaned about Jane. And this close relationship may have provided the basis for the many novels in which Austen explores the connections among sisters.

Neither Jane nor Cassandra ever married, though they had early offers. Yet this situation was not entirely uncommon for the time. Perhaps due to the added burden of finding a suitable mate within one's social class, between 10–35% of people in Jane Austen's time remained single. Yet Jane's status as a single woman did not upset her. The lack of a husband allowed her the freedom to concentrate on her writing, and the opportunity to be a keen observer of the actions of those around her.

By the age of twenty-five, Austen had already written three novels, though *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen's first novel to be published, was not released until 1811. In the early nineteenth century, publishing was one of the few ways middle-class women could earn money, and Austen used her modest earnings to supplement her income. Two years later, her second novel, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) was published and proved to be extremely popular, ending Austen's anonymity. Her next novel, *Mansfield Park* (1814), did not sell as well, and Austen followed it in 1816 with *Emma*, the last novel to be published before her early death. In failing health, Austen wrote her final novel, *Persuasion*, in under a year. *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* were published posthumously in 1818, and together earned little over 500 pounds, a small amount by today's standards, but more money than Austen herself ever saw in her lifetime.

Persuasion represents the maturity of Austen's work, and more than her other novels, evidences Austen's comic yet biting satire of the titled upper classes. Austen's own social position, as the daughter of a parish clergyman, placed her firmly in the respected middle-class, but as an author she was free to step outside her sphere and write about the personal flaws and mistakes of the proud gentry. Such subtle criticism is especially apparent in her descriptions of the ridiculous and vain Sir Walter Elliot, who is forced to leave his family's house because of his lavish and imprudent overspending.

Austen's final novel also stands out for the nationalistic pride expressed by the characters throughout the work. The reverence which *Persuasion*'s female characters hold for the Naval officers reflects the esteem in which the Navy was held in Austen's day. At the height of the British Empire, amidst wars with both France and America, the Navy was admired as the defender of British interests throughout the world. Such Navy heroes in the novel introduce a new, rougher ideal of manliness into Austen's world, for which the feminized Sir Walter serves as the unfortunate foil.

Plot Overview

Persuasion opens with a brief history of the Elliot family as recorded in Sir Walter Elliot's favorite book, *The Baronetcy*. We learn that the Elliots are a respected, titled, landowning family. Lady Elliot, Sir Walter's wife died fourteen years ago and left him with three daughters: Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary. Both Elizabeth and Anne are single, but Mary, the youngest is married to a wealthy man named

Charles Musgrove; they live close by. Sir Walter, who lavishly overspends, has brought the family into great debt. When Lady Russell, a trusted family advisor, suggests that the Elliots reduce their spending, Sir Walter is horrified. He is exceedingly vain and cannot bear to imagine life without his usual comforts. But with no other option, the Elliots decide they must relocate to a house in Bath where their expenses will be more manageable. They intend to rent the family estate, Kellynch Hall.

Character List

Anne Elliot - The novel's protagonist, Anne Elliot is the middle daughter of Sir Walter Elliot, a landed baronet from a socially important family. Quiet and reserved, yet clever and practical, Anne sees the foolishness in her father's lavish spending. Because she is neither the most beautiful nor the most image-conscious of his daughters, Sir Walter often overlooks Anne, slights her, and dismisses her opinions. Though Anne seeks love, she is conscious of her duty to her position and the prudence of making a suitable match. Seeking to please those around her, in her youth, she was persuaded from following her true desires. In contrast to both of her two sisters and to the other young female characters in the novel, Anne is level-headed, considerate of others, and humble. She balances duty and passion in a composed and respectful way.

Captain Frederick Wentworth - The object of Anne's affections, Captain Wentworth is a gallant Naval officer who, well-educated and well-mannered, has made his own fortunes by climbing the Naval ranks. He values constancy, practicality, and firmness of mind in women, characteristics that will make a good Navy wife. Though Captain Wentworth is almost universally liked and respected for his gentle nature and kind attentions to others, Sir Walter disdains him for his 'lower' birth.

Sir Walter Elliot - The father of Anne Elliot, baronet, and owner of Kellynch Hall, Sir Walter is a caricature of the impractical titled upper classes. Extraordinarily vain, Sir Walter lines his dressing room with mirrors, and agrees to be seen in public only with attractive or well-born people. Conscious of keeping up grand appearances, Sir Walter spends lavishly, and brings his family into debt. A poor judge of character, he is easily fooled by those who would take advantage of him.

Elizabeth Elliot - The eldest daughter of Sir Walter and the older sister of Anne, Elizabeth Elliot is her father's favorite. Like her father, she is vain and primarily concerned with keeping up appearances and associating with important people. At the end of the novel, Elizabeth is the only one of the Elliot daughters to remain single, there being no one of adequate birth to suit her taste.

Mr. William Elliot - Anne Elliot's cousin, and heir to Kellynch Hall, Mr. William Elliot is a smooth talker who everyone agrees is "perfectly what he ought to be." Only six months after the death of his first wife, and at the end of a marriage that was generally known to be unhappy, Mr. Elliot is searching for a new bride. Good-looking and well-mannered, Mr. Elliot talks his way back into the good graces of Sir Walter, yet Anne questions his true motives.

Mary Elliot Musgrove - The youngest Elliot sister, Mary is married to Charles Musgrove and has two small boys. She is high strung, often hysterical, and always aware of the imagined slights others have done to her. A rather inattentive mother, Mary focuses on social climbing.

Charles Musgrove - Mary's husband, and heir to the great house at Uppercross, Charles is a relatively good-natured man who patiently endures his wife's trials. He would have preferred to marry Anne Elliot.

Louisa Musgrove - Charles's younger sister, Louisa is young, accomplished, and headstrong. She falls easily in love and admires the Navy excessively.

Henrietta Musgrove - Younger sister of Charles and older sister of Louisa, Henrietta is also young and fun-loving. Though she is not as decisive as Louisa, Henrietta sees the charms both of her cousin Charles Hayter and of the dashing Captain Wentworth.

Mr. & Mrs. Musgrove - The parents of Charles, Henrietta, and Louisa, the Musgroves have provided a balanced, happy home for their children at Uppercross. They are a landed family, second in rank in the parish only to the Elliots. They are practical, and want only happiness for their children.

Charles Hayter - Cousin to the Musgroves (his mother is the sister of Mrs. Musgrove), the Hayter family is nevertheless enmeshed in a much lower social circle because of their 'inferior, retired, and unpolished way of living.' Charles Hayter, the eldest son, however, chose to be a scholar and a gentleman, and consequently has much more refined manners. He will one day inherit his family's land, and he hopes to court his cousin Henrietta and make her his wife.

Captain Benwick - Once engaged to the Captain Harville's now-deceased sister, Fanny, Captain Benwick is a depressed naval officer who mourns the death of his lost love. He is a shy man and an ardent reader of poetry. When Anne meets him, he is on leave from his ship and he is living with Captain and Mrs. Harville. He seeks a young woman to help him get over Fanny, and his attentions turn, surprisingly, to Louisa Musgrove.

Lady Russell - The former best friend of Anne's deceased mother, Lady Russell is a woman of considerable birth and wealth who serves as advisor to the Elliot family. A practical woman, she is conscious of class interactions and finances. Anne is her favorite of the Elliot daughters and, though she means well, she sometimes gives Anne bad advice.

Admiral and Mrs. Croft - The amiable couple that rents Kellynch Hall when Sir Walter can no longer afford to stay there. The Admiral is a decorated Naval officer and his devoted wife travels with him when he is at sea. The Crofts are one of the few examples of an older happily married couple in any of Austen's novels.

Mrs. Clay - The daughter of Mr. Shepard (family advisor to Sir Walter), Mrs. Clay soon becomes the friend of Elizabeth Elliot. Though she is of much lower birth, freckled, and not so very attractive, Mrs. Clay is a well-mannered widow. Anne, however, sees danger in the way she endears herself to Sir Walter, and suspects she may seek to marry in a class far above her own.

Mrs. Smith - The girlhood friend of Anne Elliot who is currently living in Bath, Mrs. Smith has fallen on hard times. After her husband went into debt and left her a widow, Mrs. Smith was left with nothing. Now crippled by an illness, Mrs. Smith rekindles her former friendship with Anne and provides her with information that helps Anne learn more of Mr. Elliot. Mrs. Smith functions in the story to highlight Anne's high value on friendship and disregard for maintaining appearances at all cost.

Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret - The Irish cousins of the Elliots, Lady Dalrymple and her ugly daughter, Miss Carteret, come to Bath. Though they are uninteresting and unclever, Sir Walter seeks their renewed acquaintance because of their high social position.

Captain Harville and Mrs. Harville - Friends of Captain Wentworth, this couple resides in Lyme and kindly cares for Louisa after her fall.

Analysis of Major Characters

Anne Elliot

Anne Elliot, the protagonist of *Persuasion*, is, like most Austen heroines, witty, clever, and considerate. Austen referred to her in one of her letters as "a heroine who is almost too good for me." Though Austen very frankly notes that the bloom of youth has left Anne, and that she is not the prettiest of the young ladies in the novel, Anne becomes most decidedly more attractive when her better qualities are noted. Anne is proud of her appearance, and she is deeply hurt after overhearing that Captain Wentworth thinks her appearance much changed for the worst. Unlike her father, Anne also takes pride in practicality, intellect, and patience.

Anne is feminine while possessing none of what Austen clearly sees as the negative characteristics of her gender; Anne is neither catty, flighty, nor hysterical. On the contrary, she is level-headed in difficult situations and constant in her affections. Such qualities make her the desirable sister to marry; she is the first choice of Charles Musgrove, Captain Wentworth, and Mr. Elliot.

That Anne has her own mind is clear from the way she rebels against the vanity of her father and elder sister. But Anne is not one to avoid her responsibility and duty as a member of the upper class. She understands and respects the importance of making a "suitable" match, and is offended by the prospect of someone as low as Mrs. Clay entering into her family through marriage. She is conscious of the social structure in which her relations operate, and though she may seek a bit more flexibility, she by no means wishes to seriously challenge notions of class.

In the end, Anne concludes that she is right to have been persuaded by Lady Russell, even if the advice itself was misguided. The conclusion implies that what might be considered Anne's flaw, her ability to be persuaded by others, is not really a flaw at all. It is left to the reader to agree or disagree with this. But overall, she must be highly regarded; for in her respect for duty and with an independent mind, Anne balances passion and practicality.

Sir Walter Elliot

Sir Walter acts as a foil to both Captain Wentworth and to Anne Elliot. As a vain, pretentious, and stubborn baronet, he maintains personal qualities that are abhorrent to Austen's protagonists. Selfish and self-absorbed, he is unable to think past himself and his own immediate desires. Yet Sir Walter is not at all evil or ill-inclined; rather, he is comically ridiculous, a caricature of the old, titled class. Sir Walter allows Austen to poke fun at the declining aristocracy. With the rise of industry in Great Britain beginning in the late eighteenth century, old, titled families were forced to consider accepting the nouveau riche into their circle. Such industrial magnates and wealthy merchants who had made their fortunes trading with the colonies had large amounts of money, and could afford to challenge the importance of birth in social interaction. Sir Walter's strong attachment to the significance of birth appears antiquated in the new century of progress.

Sir Walter is an impractical man; his habits of lavish spending and his strong desire to maintain appearances threaten the very future of the Elliot family. This is a grave character flaw, which Anne does not easily forgive. But his vanity is perhaps the defining character of Sir Walter. With a dressing room surrounded by mirrors, a Baronetage book treasured for its description of the Elliot family, and a predilection to be seen only with attractive and socially important people, Sir Walter is the very image of conceit. Yet, Sir Walter's ridiculousness highlights the fact that his kind is no longer the preferred version of manliness. He is an effeminate man, one who would shy away from the sun for fear of a negative reaction of his complexion. In stark contrast is the gallant, brave naval officer, Captain Wentworth, a very different and more modern ideal of the British gentleman.

Captain Frederick Wentworth

Captain Wentworth is the prototype of the 'new gentleman.' Maintaining the good manners, consideration, and sensitivity of the older type, Wentworth adds the qualities of gallantry, independence, and bravery that come with being a well-respected Naval officer. He has made his own fortune through hard work and good sense, in direct contrast to Sir Walter who has only wasted the money that came to him through his title. Without land or high birth, Captain Wentworth is not the

traditional match for a woman of Anne Eliot's position. But in true Austenian fashion, his fine personal qualities are enough to surmount the now divide which separates his position from that of Anne.

In the novel, Captain Wentworth develops, eventually overcoming his pride and shame at being once refused, in order to make another ardent overture to his chosen bride. This development is a sign of a promising future for their relationship. Like Admiral Croft, who allows his wife to drive the carriage alongside him and to help him steer, Captain Wentworth will defer to Anne throughout their marriage. Austen envisions this kind of equal partnership as the ideal marriage.

Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

Themes

Class Rigidity and Social Mobility

The issues of class rigidity and social mobility are the most important themes in *Persuasion*. Marriage and the naval profession are two means by which individuals may improve their social class. Austen is not a revolutionary; she defends the values and traditions of respect for the social structure. Yet she is subtly subversive in her support of greater social mobility. The Navy's role in gradually increasing class flexibility is stated to be one of its "domestic virtues." But there are rules and limits to social ambition in Austen's world. Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Clay are punished for the selfishness they show in overstepping their bounds and breaking these rules. Austen is conservative in her respect for class traditions, yet practically she recognizes the advantages of greater social flexibility.

Persuasion

The novel asks whether it is better to be firm in one's convictions or to be open to the suggestions of others. After being dismissed by Anne eight years ago, Captain Wentworth believes strongly that any woman he marries will have a strong character and independent mind. While Anne believes that these are good qualities, she is also receptive to a sense of obligation and duty. She concludes that it was right for her to allow herself to be persuaded because "a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion." In the end, Austen allows the reader to judge whether persuasion is a positive or negative force in the novel.

Silly Parents

Silly parents play an important role in *Persuasion*, and are a recurring theme in many of Jane Austen's novels. Here, Sir Walter's imprudence and insensible extravagance cause the initial conflict that force the Elliots to leave their homes and "retrench" in Bath. Sir Walter is not a source of guidance for his daughters; he is so vain and self-involved that he is unable to make good decisions for the family. He has transmitted his 'silliness' to both Elizabeth and Mary. Elizabeth shares his vanity and self-importance; Mary is so filled with self-pity that she thinks everything a personal slight. Her children are uncontrollable because she takes little interest in teaching them. Although Anne has the good sense and strength of character to avoid the silliness, she is nevertheless inconvenienced by it. Children who must put up with irresponsible or ridiculous parents are a consistent theme in the novel.

Separate Spheres

The idea of separate spheres was a nineteenth-century doctrine that there are two domains of life: the public and the domestic. Traditionally, the male would be in charge of the public domain (finances, legal matters, etc.) while the female would be in charge of the private domain (running the house, ordering the servants, etc.). This novel questions the idea of separate spheres by introducing the Crofts. Presented as an example of a happy, ideal marriage, Admiral and Mrs. Croft share the spheres of their life. Mrs. Croft joins her husband on his ships at sea, and Admiral Croft is happy to help his wife in the chores around the home. They have such a partnership that they even share the task of driving a carriage. Austen, in this novel, challenges the prevailing notion of separate spheres.

The Changing Ideal of the Gentleman

This novel presents two very different versions of the English gentleman. On one hand is Sir Walter, the traditional, land-owning, titled man who avoids work and seeks comfort. On the other hand are Captain Wentworth and Admiral Croft. Both naval officers are working men who have made their own fortunes. Though their manners are impeccable, they are not of the same high social rank as Sir Walter. In this period of English history, the definition of a 'gentleman' was growing increasingly more flexible; this novel reflects that change.

Motifs

Walking

Walking is a motif that is employed throughout *Persuasion* and Austen's other novels. When characters go for walks in the novel, it often signals a period of character development. Walking entails conversing with others, commenting on one's surroundings, and reacting to the world outside. It allows an author to expand upon her reader's understanding of a character by bringing the character out into a different light. In *Persuasion*, walks are essential for the progression of Anne and Captain Wentworth's relationship. Anne learns of his feelings regarding female constancy on one of their initial walks, and at the end they reveal their feelings to each other on a walk home through the park. Walking is a frequent and essential motif.

Marriage

Marriage is another motif which plays a strong role in Austen's novels. It is not only the consummation of a love affair; marriage directly compares social ranks in society. Individuals, classes, titles, and accomplishments are measured and weighed in the consideration of a marriage. The courting and engagement which precede the ceremony allows friends and family to offer their opinions as to the appropriateness of the match. Marriage thus serves as a kind of social yardstick to measure and compare the characters in the novel.

Summary

Chapter 1

Austen opens her novel by introducing Sir Walter Elliot, the owner of Kellynch Hall, and a man for whom "vanity was the beginning and end of [his] character." His favorite book, the reader is told, is the *Baronetage*, a book which holds record of the most important families in England, and which, most importantly records Sir Walter's own personal history. In this passage, we learn that Sir Walter's wife, Elizabeth, has passed away fourteen years ago, and that he has three daughters: Elizabeth, Anne, and Mary. Of the girls, only Mary, the youngest, is married (to a Mr. Charles Musgrove). Having only three daughters and no sons, the Elliot family fortune will pass to William Elliot, the girls' cousin, upon the death of Sir Walter. Sir Walter has decided, "for his daughters' sake," not to remarry.

Sir Walter's deceased wife, the former Lady Elliot, had been an excellent woman, and had complemented her husband's flaws with her sensibility and good judgment. But in the years since her passing, Sir Walter has fallen in love with himself. Lady Russell, an old friend of Lady Elliot has helped Sir Walter raise his daughters and has become a trusted family advisor.

In this opening chapter, we are also introduced to the three Elliot daughters: Elizabeth, who is beautiful, yet vain like her father; Anne, who has a sweetness of character, but is often overlooked by her family; and Mary, who thinks herself very important since her marriage. Of the three, Elizabeth is the favorite of Sir Walter, and Anne is the favorite of Lady Russell.

The history of Mr. William Elliot is also recounted in this chapter. The family had hoped their heir would marry Elizabeth, yet he had slighted and disappointed them, opting for independence by marrying another woman of fortune and lower birth. Since this slight seven years ago, he has not been in the good graces of the Elliot family.

Finally, we learn that the Elliot family is distressed for money. Sir Walter has spent lavishly on a lifestyle well beyond his means. Mr. Shepard and Lady Russell, two trusted family advisors, help the Elliots save money and get their finances back in order.

Chapter 2

Mr. Shepard and Lady Russell draw up a plan for ways that Sir Elliot can save money. They decide that he must "retrench" by seriously cutting back on his expenditures if he is to get out of the large debt he has accrued. Lady Russell, argues that such cuts will in no way lessen Sir Walter's standing in the eyes of sensible people since "Kellynch Hall has a respectability in itself, which cannot be affected by these reductions." Anne agrees and thinks their spending should be cut even more, since there is much they do not need.

Yet, Sir Walter will not hear of altering his lifestyle so significantly. He believes doing without such comforts would be disgraceful to his rank. Finally, Mr. Shepard suggests that the Elliots should leave Kellynch Hall for a short time. In another house, he reasons, the Elliots could more easily alter their style of living to become a more modest household. Sir Walter agrees to this option only if they can find a tenant worthy enough to rent Kellynch. Sir Walter decides that the family will relocate to Bath, dismissing Anne's dislike of the city.

Lady Russell thinks the relocation of the family is a very good idea for two reasons: first, it will help the Elliots save money, and second, it will hopefully separate Elizabeth from her new friend Mrs. Clay, the widowed daughter of Mr. Shepard. Lady Russell is a good woman, but she values propriety, rank, and consequence. She feels that it is out of place for Elizabeth to be friends with Mrs. Clay and she feels the slight that Elizabeth prefers the company of this woman to Anne. We learn that Lady Russell thinks Mrs. Clay a "very dangerous companion."

Analysis

The opening chapters of *Persuasion* introduce us to the main characters of the novel and set up the problem which will drive the rest of the plot. The primary conflict is the difficulty of saving money while keeping up the appearance of a rich and titled landowner. The problem Sir Walter faces is not unique; it emerges in part because of the class system of early nineteenth-century England. Such a system, in which families are strictly categorized by their wealth, rank, and birth, necessitates living a lifestyle consistent with one's class. Sir Walter is horrified that people might think less of him for spending less money and is shocked at the prospect of giving up comforts that he considers necessities.

Austen introduces the concept of "retrenching" and implies that it is not an infrequent occurrence for the wealthy families of her time. "Retrenching" involves living less ostentatiously for a period of time in order to save money and get out of debt. In this period of industrial and imperial progress, the traditional aristocracy was having an increasingly difficult time maintaining their large estates and lavish way of living. Lady Russell suggests that the retrenching of respected families is a common occurrence. She notes that, "there will be nothing singular in his case, and it is singularity which often makes the worst part of our suffering, as it always does of our conduct."

In these chapters, we see the first example of persuasion. Anne, Lady Russell, and Mr. Shepard gently convince Sir Walter that it would be best for him to leave Kellynch Hall for a time. They persuade not by appealing to practicality, about which he cares little, but by appealing to his vanity. He is induced to believe that Bath will provide him more consequence and enjoyment than he can receive in Somersetshire. This is an example of positive persuasion that influences a decision on the side of practicality.

These opening chapters establish the Elliot family dynamics. Sir Walter is a "silly parent," and like silly parents in many Austen novels, he precipitates the initial crisis. His vanity and impracticality mean that his more sensible daughter, Anne, must find a way to straighten out the mess. Sir Walter serves as a foil for the valued characteristics which will bring closure to the novel. By existing as a conceited, image-conscious, and insensible man, Sir Walter highlights Anne's opposing qualities of self-deprecation, humility, and sensibility. He has not transmitted his characteristics to her, yet their differences foreshadow potential future conflict in the novel.

Summary

Chapter 3

Observing that England is now at peace, Mr. Shepard remarks that many men of the English Navy will soon be home on land. He suggests that a sailor would be a very desirable tenant to rent Kellynch Hall because they are so meticulous and careful with their possessions.

The family enters into a conversation on the merits of the Navy as a profession. Anne asserts that naval men work extremely hard and that they must all be indebted to them for their service. Sir Walter counters that he would never want any of his relatives to be a part of the Navy for two reasons: first, it is a "means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction" and second, it severely weathers a man's youth and appearance. Mrs. Clay makes the point that every career, except that of the privileged landowner, does its part to wear on the looks and health of men.

News comes that Admiral Croft, a native of Somersetshire and a man with quite a large fortune, is interested in renting Kellynch Hall. Sir Walter is concerned that Admiral Croft's appearance must be "orange" and weatherbeaten from all his time at sea. But Mr. Shepard assures him that the Admiral is a "well-looking man" who would be an extremely desirable and appreciative tenant. The Admiral is a gentleman, and he has a wife but no children. A woman, Shepard argues, is much more likely to keep a watchful eye over the estate. Furthermore, Admiral Croft has family connections to the area; his wife's brother, Mr. Wentworth, was a curate at Monkford. Sir Walter concedes that the sentence, "I have let my house to Admiral Croft" has a good sound to it, since the consequence and rank of the tenant is quite clear. Finally convinced by the "extreme happiness" the Crofts would have at being chosen to be the tenants of Kellynch, Sir Walter agrees to let them rent his estate. Elizabeth is strongly in favor of going to Bath and is happy to have a tenant so soon. At the end of the chapter, Anne walks outside with flushed cheeks and thinks fondly to herself that her love interest "may soon be walking here."

Chapter 4

Anne's love interest is Captain Frederick Wentworth, the brother of the former curate of Monkford and of Mrs. Croft. The narrator recounts the events of the summer of 1806 in which Captain Wentworth was visiting his brother in the area and became acquainted with Anne. They fell in love and had hoped to marry but Anne's family and her trusted friend Lady Russell thought it a degrading alliance. In 1806 Captain Wentworth was without fortune or high birth. Lady Russell thought it was her duty, in the absence of Anne's mother, to persuade her not to marry beneath her social class. She vehemently opposed the match.

Anne, very young and gentle at this time, did not want to contradict her father's wishes and her friend's advice. She was persuaded that their engagement was improper and impractical, and she ended it. Her consolation was that her prudence and self-denial was for his good, as well as her own, and that Captain Wentworth would be better off unattached to her. But he was angry at being given up so easily, and he proudly left the country. Anne suffered from the lonely effects of her decision for the seven years from their short engagement to the present time. She did not stop thinking about her Captain, who by now, she reasons, must have made a large fortune.

Since that time, there was no man who matched Captain Wentworth in Anne's affections, though Charles Musgrove proposed to her. Although her father condoned this match, she refused him, and he married instead her younger sister, Mary.

Anne regretted her refusal of Captain Wentworth, but she did not blame Lady Russell for her unwanted advice. She understood that Lady Russell's motives were good, however selfish her father's might be. Seven years let Anne mature, and her maturity brought a greater understanding of love, romance, and happiness. The thought of Captain Wentworth's sister inhabiting Kellynch Hall brings all these emotions to the forefront of Anne's mind.

Analysis

Persuasion explores the role of the Navy in early nineteenth-century class-structured society. Sir Walter's principal objection to the Navy is that it brings "persons of obscure birth into undue distinction." Thus, he dislikes and disapproves of its function as a means of social mobility. The Navy allows men who are dedicated and hard-working to build not only a fortune, but also to gain respect and social status. His objection then, is not only to the Navy, but to increasing social mobility in society. Sir Walter's dislike of this progress, in which birthright loses some of its social importance, is representative of upper-class nineteenth-century British men.

On the other hand, Anne sees the Navy as a source of national pride. In this period of English history, England was often embroiled in wars with France and skirmishes with America. Domestic politics gave way to perceived international threats and the Navy was considered the arm of English power and the defender of British sovereignty. The officers of the Navy held a charm and an attraction for young girls at home, who believed that they had a reputation for gallantry and bravery.

Chapter Four highlights the theme of persuasion. Anne is persuaded by the disapproval of her father and of Lady Russell to end her engagement with Captain Wentworth. Such advice is against her initial decision, but she believes it is right to defer to those older and wiser, who must, she assumes, have her best interest at heart. Though seven years later Anne regrets her decision to break the engagement, Austen leaves it unclear whether her ability to be persuaded is a positive or negative character trait. Anne is torn between her duty to her class and her passion for Captain Wentworth.

Austen's style makes use of free indirect discourse, which interweaves grammatical and other features of the character's direct speech with the narrator's indirect report. This technique allows the narrator to take on the speech or thought patterns of a particular character, often expressing a sense of irony. Thus we learn that from Sir Walter's point of view, "an admiral speaks his own consequence, and, at the same time, can never make a baronet look small."

Summary

Chapter 5

Admiral and Mrs. Croft come to see Kellynch. They approve of the house, grounds, and furniture, and hit it off very well with Sir Walter and Elizabeth. Sir Walter is flattered and gratified by their polished behavior and good manners. He thinks the Admiral one of the "best-looking sailors he has ever met." It is formally approved that the Crofts will rent Kellynch. Sir Walter and Elizabeth plan to take Mrs. Clay with them to Bath as an assistant and companion. Both Anne and Lady Russell feel the imprudence of this arrangement. Though Mrs. Clay has freckles and a projecting tooth, she is not altogether bad-looking and Anne suspects that her mild manners may allow her to form an intimacy with Sir Walter which would be neither appropriate nor desirable for the Elliot family. In an effort to warn Elizabeth of this danger, Anne suggests the impropriety of bringing Mrs. Clay to Bath. But Elizabeth rejects Anne's suggestion, confident that Mrs. Clay is not pretty enough for their father to ever consider her a potential wife.

Claiming that she is unwell, Mary requests that Anne come to stay with her for a few weeks at Uppercross Cottage, rather than immediately joining Sir Walter and Elizabeth at Bath. Anne, happy to be of some use and grateful to stay in Somersetshire a while longer, gladly agrees to go to Mary. She finds her sister in a very bad mood, lying on a couch and complaining that she has been alone all

morning; Charles is out shooting and her two small sons are unmanageable. Mary, we are told, was never as pretty as either of her two sisters; she has a trying nature and easily falls into self-pity when others fail to pay her attention. Anne finally manages to cheer her up enough that she could get off the sofa and go with Anne to visit the Musgroves at the Great House.

At the Great House, Austen introduces us to the Musgroves, a happy family, "friendly and hospitable, not much educated and not at all elegant." The family consists of the mother and father, the three adult children: Charles (Mary's husband), Henrietta, and Louisa, who have just returned from school at Exeter, and younger children who are unnamed. Anne enjoys the Musgrove household for its merriness and comfort. She encourages the Miss Musgrove to join her and Mary for a walk.

Chapter 6

At Uppercross, Anne notices the very different topics that occupy the Musgroves' attention. Little concerned with discussing appearances and social standing, the Musgrove family occupies itself with hunting, newspapers, house-keeping, dress, dancing, and music. She finds their presence a welcome change from the company of her father and Elizabeth.

Austen describes the marriage of Charles and Mary Musgrove as reasonably happy. Charles is good-natured enough to put up with Mary's moods, though he wastes his time on sport. Charles is much better with the children, but Mary's interference makes them unmanageable. Anne gets along tolerably with the whole family, and the young boys respect her much more than their mother.

The Musgrove family is quite pleased to have Anne visiting. While Anne is there, Mary is much happier to have a constant companion. Periodically, both Charles Musgrove and his parents entreat Anne to use her influence upon her sister to make changes. They would like Mary to better manage her children and her home, and Anne is constantly made a middle party to small complaints.

Though Anne is happy at Uppercross, it bothers her deeply that the Crofts have now moved into Kellynch. She thinks sadly of her home being inhabited by other people. She and Mary go to pay a visit to the Crofts. The Crofts are amiable people, and Mrs. Croft has a weather-beaten complexion from spending much time at sea with her husband. Mrs. Croft mentions that her other brother, Mr. Wentworth is married, and Anne briefly fears that it is her Captain Wentworth to which Mrs. Croft refers. But Captain Wentworth is soon expected to be visiting. This news excites and unnerves Anne.

The name of Captain Wentworth sparks a recollection in Mrs. Musgrove. She remembers that her son Dick served under Captain Wentworth in the Navy and wrote of him fondly. Dick was a "troublesome, hopeless" son who had been sent to sea at the age of twenty because he was unmanageable on land. Though his family had never been very attached to him, Dick's death affected his mother deeply. To hear Captain Wentworth's name, a man whom her son respected and described as "dashing," made Mrs. Musgrove remember her son and grieve his loss again.

Analysis

Austen continues to explore the complex English class system. Comparing her own household to that of the Musgroves allows Anne to make important observations about class divisions in England. Although the Musgroves are a wealthy, landowning family, second in the parish only to the Elliots, they are not titled. They do not have as high birth and family connections as the Elliots do. Though the Elliots are perfectly happy to interact and even to intermarry with them, there are distinct differences in their ways of life. Anne notices that the Musgroves discuss sport, dress, and daily activities; they are not nearly as concerned with appearances, social standing, and the affairs of other families. This difference is at first refreshing to Anne, but at the same time, slightly disconcerting. The narrator describes the Musgroves as "not much educated and not at all elegant." Anne enjoys the

Musgroves' company, but does not wish to emulate them; her taste seeks more education and more elegance. Though Anne finds both of these qualities in her own family, she dislikes their close-minded elitism.

These chapters touch upon the social positions of women within the class system. In the late nineteenth-century, a woman's social rank was extremely tenuous. Women were unique in the class society for their ability to rise or fall in social station easily. After marriage, a woman's rank was entirely dependent upon her husband's birth and social standing. In contrast, although a man might increase his fortune, he could not improve his rank by marrying a well-born woman; his wife would only fall to his level. Choosing a marriage partner well, then, was of the utmost importance for a woman. Her friends and family would seek to guide her in finding the very best man available.

In these chapters, the theme of social mobility for women is illustrated by the "dangerous" prospect of a match between Mrs. Clay and Sir Walter. Anne thinks taking Mrs. Clay to Bath is entirely imprudent and unwise, and she considers it her duty to warn Elizabeth that such a match might be a possibility. The "danger" of such a marriage is twofold. First, a marriage like this is a way for a woman of obscure birth to be brought into "undue distinction" and though Anne does not specifically say this, she is not liberal enough in her views to avoid being offended by such a presumptuous move on Mrs. Clay's part. Second, such a marriage would turn Mrs. Clay into Lady Elliot, thereby allowing her to take precedence over both Elizabeth and Anne at family functions. When the narrator refers to the specific "danger" to Elizabeth, she means that if a marriage were to happen, Elizabeth would be ousted from her position as first lady of Kellynch Hall.

Summary

Chapter 7

Captain Wentworth arrives at Kellynch to visit his sister, Mrs. Croft. Mr. Musgrove goes to call on him and decides he likes the Captain very much. He invites Captain Wentworth to the Great House at Uppercross, and Mary and Anne are invited to join them in the visit. Anne is quite nervous at the prospect of seeing Captain Wentworth again after such a long time. The two sisters are on their way to the Great House when Mary's oldest son has a bad fall and seriously dislocates his collarbone. Everyone is in distress and they call for the apothecary to come examine the boy. They find that his injury is not life-threatening.

Henrietta and Louisa Musgrove come to visit the child. They bring news that Captain Wentworth has been to their house; they both appear absolutely smitten and pleased by him. It is announced that he will have dinner the following day at the Great House. The next day, the boy is in stable condition and Charles Musgrove (the boy's father) announces his intention to dine with his parents and Captain Wentworth. Mary is upset that Charles would leave her alone at home with Anne and the child. She is mostly angered by the idea that her husband may enjoy himself while she is stuck at home. Anne settles the matter by offering to stay home with the boy while Mary goes to the dinner with her husband. Though Anne consoles herself that she will be very useful to the sick child, she cannot believe that Captain Wentworth is less than half a mile away. That evening, Charles and Mary return after a lovely dinner. Everyone is charmed by the humor and good manners of the Captain.

The next morning, Captain Wentworth comes to call on Mary at breakfast before he and Charles go out shooting. Anne and the Captain glance at each other briefly, but it is a short meeting. Anne wonders how eight years have changed the Captain's feelings for her. Mary tells Anne that Henrietta asked the Captain what he thought of Anne and he responded that Anne "was so altered he should

not have known her again." Anne is understandably hurt by this remark, but she reasons that it is better to know his feelings for her, whatever they may be.

The narrator tells the reader that Captain Wentworth has not forgiven Anne. He was very attached to her, and he feels that her actions eight years ago show a "feebleness of character" that he cannot endure. Now he is on the hunt for a pleasing woman to marry; anyone, he thinks, except Anne Elliot.

Chapter 8

Captain Wentworth and Anne Elliot are now in the same social circle and must repeatedly dine together. They refrain from having any conversation, however, except what politeness necessitates. Anne thinks about how their temperaments are perfectly suited to each other. She thinks that Admiral and Mrs. Croft are the only couple she knows that could be nearly as attached and happy as she and Captain Wentworth once had the chance of being.

The dinner conversation turns to the Navy and to Captain Wentworth's experiences on the ships. Mrs. Musgrove implores him to tell her what he knows of her late son, Dick Musgrove, who served beneath him on the *Laconia*. Captain Wentworth moves to sit next to Mrs. Musgrove and talk to her, comfortingly, about her son.

Captain Wentworth is sensitive in dealing with Mrs. Musgrove, amusing at dinner, and outspoken in his beliefs. He admits that he would never willingly let women aboard his ship, as he thinks it is not a suitable place for them. Mrs. Croft disagrees, and asserts her feeling that she has always been perfectly comfortable on board her husband's ship. The Crofts joke that when Frederick Wentworth is married, he will sing a different tune. The Crofts discuss their marriage. Mrs. Croft travels with her husband almost everywhere and cannot bear to be separated from him.

At the end of the evening there is dancing, and Anne prefers to play music for them all night. Captain Wentworth seems to be having a terrific time. All the young ladies, including both Miss Musgroves are enamored by him. Although he rarely addresses her, Anne is hurt by the "cold politeness" in his voice.

Analysis

Austen uses the narrative mode of free indirect discourse to indirectly convey the thoughts and feelings of her characters. In Chapter Seven, which concentrates on Anne's reaction to Captain Wentworth's reappearance, the narrative mode is especially apparent. Austen writes: "She had seen him. They had met. They had been once more in the same room!" Such a series of sentences allows Austen to express the excitement of her protagonist without directly forcing the narrator to declare it. This mode of narration is a literary technique characteristic of Austen.

These chapters address the issue of motherhood, another frequent theme in Austen's novels. We see two very different motherly reactions in these passages, that of Mary for her young son who is hurt, and that of Mrs. Musgrove for her late son, Dick. Mary, though initially hysterical at the thought of her boy being seriously injured, soon gets over her hysteria and loses interest when she realizes he will most likely be all right. She reasons that she may as well go out to dinner, since she can be of little use to her son at home. Mary is one of Austen's "silly parents." She is silly because she pretends to have all the concerns of a mother, when in reality she has little loving feeling or maternal protectiveness. Austen presents Mary as an example of a bad (but not malicious) mother, someone who cares more about her own entertainment than her child's well-being.

Mrs. Musgrove is reminded of her late son when Captain Wentworth, his former commander, comes to dine with them. She wishes to hear as much about her son as possible, and though not hysterical,

shows great regret and sadness over the fate of her boy. Unlike Mary, Mrs. Musgrove is not a "silly parent," yet like her daughter-in-law, she uses her children to draw attention to herself. Encouraging Captain Wentworth to speak of Dick means that he must give her attention and comfort. Both passages are examples of Austen's close observation of social roles and the different ways people fill those roles in society.

Summary

Chapter 9

Captain Wentworth has come to stay at Kellynch for an extended length of time. He makes frequent trips to Uppercross to visit the Musgroves. Charles Hayter, who is a cousin of the Musgroves and a suitor of Henrietta's, is disturbed to come back from his short trip to find Captain Wentworth so much a favorite of his cousin.

The narrator then gives background on the Hayters. Mrs. Hayter and Mrs. Musgrove are sisters, but their marriages have made a material difference in their "degree of consequence." The Hayters have an "inferior, retired and unpolished" way of living, being not so educated as the Musgroves, but there is little discord between the two amiable families. The Musgroves will not oppose a match between Henrietta and Charles Hayter if it makes her happy, but Mary thinks it a very degrading alliance for her sister-in-law.

Both Musgrove sisters seem to like Captain Wentworth, however, and the family turns to speculating which sister he will choose. Charles Hayter is quite upset at the change in Henrietta's responses toward his advances.

One morning, Captain Wentworth walks into a room while looking for the Miss Musgroves, and finds himself in a room alone with Anne and the invalid little boy. After a few awkward moments, Charles Hayter joins them, increasing the tension. The younger boy, Walter, comes in the room and starts teasing Anne; she cannot get him to disentangle himself from her. Charles Hayter tells the boy to get off his aunt, but he does not listen. Before she knows what is going on, Captain Wentworth has removed the boy from her shoulders. She is so stunned that she is unable to thank him. Later, she is grateful for his assistance, yet ashamed for being so nervous.

Chapter 10

Anne's observations make her believe that Captain Wentworth is not in love with either of the Musgrove sisters, but is just accepting and enjoying their attentions. Charles Hayter, feeling slighted by Henrietta, ceases to come to Uppercross after a few days.

In the morning, the Miss Musgroves stop by the cottage to announce that they are going for a long walk. Though it is clear they do not want Mary to join them, she insists on going along. When the gentlemen arrive, they all decide to go on a walk together and the party consists of the two Miss Musgroves, Captain Wentworth, Mary, Anne, and Charles Musgrove. Anne's intention is to stay as out of the way as possible and just to enjoy the landscape and the day. Louisa flirts with Captain Wentworth throughout the walk and declares that if she loved a man, nothing should ever separate them.

The party makes their way to Winthrop, the home of the Hayters. Mary wants to turn around immediately, as she does not approve of associating with people of such low connection, but Charles insists on calling on his aunt; he and Henrietta visit the Hayters. While Charles and Henrietta are gone, the rest of the group looks for seats in the woods. Mary is never satisfied because she thinks

Louisa must have found a better seat somewhere else. Louisa pulls Captain Wentworth aside and they talk of firmness of character; Louisa has convinced Henrietta to visit Charles, though Henrietta would have turned back from her decided destination. Captain Wentworth compares strength of character to the "happiness" of a hazelnut that has not yet dropped off the tree. The conversation continues and Louisa remarks that Mary sometimes bothers her excessively with her "Elliot pride."

Louisa tells Captain Wentworth that Charles wanted to marry Anne before Mary, but that Anne refused him. Captain Wentworth seems very interested in this piece of information. When Henrietta returns to the group, she brings Charles Hayter with her. It is now very clear that Louisa is meant for Captain Wentworth, and Henrietta for Charles.

On the walk back home, they pass Admiral and Mrs. Croft who are out in their carriage for a ride. Guessing that Anne might be tired, Captain Wentworth arranges for the Crofts to give her a ride home; Anne appreciates the kind gesture. The Crofts tell her that they hope Captain Wentworth will settle down with a nice girl soon. Anne notices that the Crofts share the reins and the responsibility of driving; Mrs. Croft steers them around posts and ruts. Anne observes that this is representative of the symbiotic way they run their marriage.

Analysis

While most of Jane Austen's novels end in marriage, few of her works provide examples of couples with long and healthy relationships. Admiral and Mrs. Croft are an exception to this rule. Austen provides them as an example of a perfect marriage. The couple cannot bear to be apart; they are constantly together, even at sea. The drive home illustrates the way their marriage runs. While Admiral Croft drives the carriage most of the time, Mrs. Croft not infrequently grabs the reins to steer them around posts, ruts, and obstacles. Their relationship is symbiotic, each depending on the other for their happiness. Such a vision is extraordinarily progressive for the time. The idea of separate spheres and responsibilities for men and women is destroyed in the Crofts' marriage. Because they do everything together, they take equal joy in going to sea and in fixing a creaky door in their home. Such an equal partnership was a very forward-looking vision for the generally conservative Austenian world.

Summary

Chapter 11

Anne plans to leave her sister Mary at Uppercross and go stay with Lady Russell for a while. She reasons this move may put her more in contact with Captain Wentworth, because Lady Russell's house is decidedly closer to Kellynch.

Captain Wentworth returns to visit Uppercross after not being seen for two days. He had gone to visit his friends, Captain and Mrs. Harville, in Lyme. He tells the Musgroves about Lyme, and they are all eager to see it. It is decided that Charles, Mary, Anne, Henrietta, Louisa, and Captain Wentworth will form a party to go visit Lyme. The following day, they arrive at Lyme, a seaside town, and are delighted by it.

Three new characters are introduced. Captain and Mrs. Harville are friends of Wentworth from the Navy who have a house in Lyme, and Captain Benwick is staying with them. The Harvilles are extremely hospitable people with excellent manners. Though they have very small quarters, they have developed great contrivances to make the best use of their space and Anne considers it a very happy home. Captain Benwick was known as "an excellent young man and an officer" but he has

fallen into a deep depression since the death of his fiancée, Fanny Harville, Captain Harville's sister. Benwick has turned to poetry as solace for his sadness.

On one of their visits with the Harvilles, it falls to Anne to make conversation with Captain Benwick. Although he is initially shy, Benwick opens up to Anne and begins discussing poetry passionately. Anne recommends that he include more prose in his daily reading. He takes her suggestion warmly, and Anne feels that she has done a good thing by patiently helping a grieving man to open up once more.

Chapter 12

The next morning, the party goes for an early morning stroll by the seashore before breakfast. While they are walking up the steps, a gentleman stops to let them pass and cannot help but look at Anne. It is clear that he finds her very attractive. Captain Wentworth notices the man admiring Anne, and turns to admire her himself.

The party goes back to the Inn to have breakfast and they find that the gentleman who admired Anne is also a guest at their hotel. They inquire as to his name and find out he is Mr. Elliot, a gentleman of large fortune. Mary assumes it must be their cousin and father's heir! She wishes that they could have been introduced before Mr. Elliot left, but Anne reminds her that such an introduction might not be proper; their father has not been on good terms with Mr. Elliot for quite some time.

The party all goes out for another walk and is joined by Captain Benwick and the Harvilles. Captain Benwick seeks Anne's company again, and Captain Harville mentions that Anne has done quite a good deed in getting Benwick talking again and bringing him out of his shell. They continue on their walk and come to a set of stairs. Louisa insists on being jumped down them by Captain Wentworth. She gets down safely but enjoys the sensation so much that she desires to do it again. But she jumps a second too soon and lands on the wall, unconscious. Mary and Henrietta become hysterical, but Anne remains calm. She directs Captain Benwick to run for a doctor and Captain Wentworth to carry her to the Inn. The Harvilles insist that Louisa be brought to their home, and there the doctor comes to examine her.

The doctor concludes that she has a severe head injury, but all is not hopeless; she will most likely have a long recovery. The Harvilles offer their home for Louisa for as long as she needs it. They decide that Captain Wentworth, Henrietta, and Mary should travel back to Uppercross to give the news to the Musgroves. Wentworth praises Anne's capability to care for Louisa. But Mary objects and will not hear of leaving her sister-in-law. She decides to stay in Lyme and sends Anne back in the carriage with Captain Wentworth. Mrs. Harville, who has nursing experience, will care for Anne.

On the ride home, Captain Wentworth expresses the guilt he feels for Louisa's fall. He asks Anne her opinion regarding the plan for breaking the news to the Musgroves. She feels grateful that he values her opinion. Captain Wentworth tells the Musgroves of Louisa's fall, drops Anne off at home, and returns as soon as possible to Lyme.

Analysis

Chapter 12 signals a climax in the novel's narrative. *Persuasion* is a linear narrative that is organized chronologically. The original edition of this novel was published in two volumes, the first volume ending at the close of Chapter 12. Louisa's fall is the greatest dramatic occurrence which has happened so far. By inserting the fall here, Austen creates a cliffhanger and encourages her readers to buy the second volume of her novel. In these chapters, the reader is shown the negative effects of what can happen when one is too stubborn. Louisa would not be persuaded to keep from jumping off

the wall. Her firmness of mind means serious injury for her and significant guilt for Captain Wentworth. He is encouraged to rethink his initial judgment of the benefit of a "strong character."

Summary

Chapter 13

Louisa's health continues to slowly improve at Lyme, and family friends bring constant updates of her condition to the Musgroves at Uppercross. Anne decides to leave Uppercross to stay with Lady Russell. The Musgroves go to Lyme to visit Louisa and to help Mrs. Harville with her own children while she is caring for their daughter.

Lady Russell comes in her carriage to collect Anne, and conversation between them is initially strained; Anne finds it hard to place importance on any of the normal events that Lady Russell is concerned about. Lady Russell finds Anne much improved in her plumpness and good looks. Anne is pleased by Lady Russell's evaluation. Anne tells Lady Russell about Captain Wentworth's attachment to Louisa Musgrove.

Lady Russell and Anne pay a visit to Mrs. Croft at Kellynch, and it pains Anne to see someone else occupying her house, though she likes the Crofts exceedingly. Admiral Croft, sensitive to her feelings, offers Anne the freedom to look about the house as much as she desires. She is grateful, but declines his offer. He mentions some of the small improvements he has happily made around Kellynch: fixing a creaky laundry door and having some of the numerous mirrors removed from Sir Walter's dressing room. He finds two small mirrors quite sufficient for himself.

The Crofts mention Captain Wentworth and how he has complimented Anne. He finds her exertions and aid to the Musgroves very admirable. Anne is flattered by this praise. The Crofts mention that they will be leaving Kellynch to go to the country and then to Bath for a few weeks. Anne is relieved, but a little disappointed, since this means she has little chance of seeing Captain Wentworth in the coming weeks.

Chapter 14

Charles and Mary finally return from Lyme. They pay a visit to Anne and Lady Russell to report that Louisa is now able to sit up, although her head is still very weak. Mary says she really enjoyed her two-week stay in Lyme; she had gone to church, bathed, dined nightly, and taken numerous books from the library. Her time was not limited by any nursing to Louisa.

Anne asks how Captain Benwick is doing, and Charles merely laughs. He thinks Captain Benwick is romantically interested in his sister-in-law. He tells Anne how highly the Captain speaks of her. Mary disagrees; she does not think Captain Benwick worthy of, or interested in, her sister. Lady Russell is amused and declares that she must see Captain Benwick for herself before she can form an opinion of him. There is a rumor that Benwick will soon ride over to Kellynch to see Anne, but he does not come, and Lady Russell dismisses him as not worth her interest.

The Musgroves return to Uppercross to care for their own younger children as well as those of the Harvilles. Lady Russell and Anne go to visit them at Uppercross. The narrator describes the strong contrast between the Musgrove house that they now see and the one of a few weeks ago. This household is filled with children, food, light, and activity, whereas only a few weeks ago the home was depressed by the thought of the family's sick daughter. Louisa is now recovering quickly and they expect her to be home soon.

Anne does not look forward to joining her father and sister in Bath; she dislikes the large, disagreeable buildings and the feel of the city. Anne receives a letter from Elizabeth reporting that their cousin, Mr. Elliot, is in Bath. He has come to visit Sir Walter, been forgiven, and is once again accepted into the company of his uncle and cousins. Anne and Lady Russell both desire to see Mr. Elliot. They make the journey to Bath.

Analysis

These chapters reflect on past occurrences describe the characters of Mary, Lady Russell, and the Musgroves. Austen contrasts the traits of various characters in these chapters. In the conversation with the Crofts, the differences between Admiral Croft and Sir Walter Elliot become evident. Admiral Croft thinks it silly to have so many mirrors constantly around him in the dressing room. He is a man of relatively simple tastes, and his comments allow the reader to see the silliness and vanity of Sir Walter. Similarly, Anne contrasts the animated and friendly Musgrove home with its formerly depressed state. Visiting such a bustling place, in which she is so warmly welcomed, heightens the contrast she fears awaits her in the coldness of Bath.

Summary

Chapter 15

Now in Bath, Anne finds her father and sister happily situated at a house in Camden Place. Although she is very depressed to be there, she finds the welcome from her family unusually warm. They are excited to show her all the new furniture and rooms of the house, but they have no inclination to listen to Anne's stories. Sir Walter and Elizabeth are quite pleased with the pleasures and accommodations that Bath affords them, and Anne is saddened that her family should be so degraded and not even feel it.

They tell Anne how happy they are to have renewed their acquaintance with Mr. Elliot. He has often been visiting them at Camden Place. They have forgiven him for the estrangement and for his choice in marrying his first wife, who was rich, but not well-born. Mr. Elliot is now in mourning, his wife having died only six months ago. Anne cannot help but be skeptical as to the reasons for her cousin so suddenly paying respects to his family after so long a separation. She guesses that he might be interested in marrying Elizabeth.

The conversation with Sir Walter and Elizabeth turns to the topic of appearance. Sir Walter announces his belief that Bath is filled with plain-looking women. He inquires after Mary's appearance.

Mr. Elliot arrives to visit them and finds Anne very attractive. He recognizes her from their brief meeting in Lyme and is very pleased to find that she is actually his cousin. He sits down with them, seems very interested in Anne, and tries repeatedly to talk to her. Anne thinks that he is polished, well-mannered, and sensible. After an hour, he rises to leave. Anne thinks her first evening in Bath has gone much better than she could have hoped.

Chapter 16

The next morning, Mrs. Clay offers to leave Bath, now that Anne has come, but Sir Walter and Elizabeth will not hear of it. This reignites worries in Anne that her father may become romantically attached to Mrs. Clay. She notices that her sister, Elizabeth, does not worry at all about this

possibility. Lady Russell, with all her propriety, is vexed that Mrs. Clay should receive any precedence over Anne at Camden Place.

Lady Russell is quite charmed by Mr. Elliot, and thinks him all that he should be: sensible, moderate, pleasant, and correct in her opinions. She has no suspicions as to his motives for reuniting with his family. Anne recognizes that she may at times disagree with Lady Russell; it is her belief that Mr. Elliot is paying them attention because he means to court Elizabeth.

News comes that Lady Dalrymple and Miss Carteret, estranged cousins of the Elliots, have arrived in Bath. Lady Dalrymple is considered nobility, and Sir Walter is extremely excited about the prospect of renewing his acquaintance with her and moving with the Dalrymples among the very finest social circles in Bath. Anne is disappointed that her father and sister have so little pride as to be in awe of their cousins. Sir Walter writes the Dalrymples a letter of apology for their estrangement and receives a forgiving note in return. Anne is ashamed that her family talks of their high relations to everybody; she sees little of merit in her awkward, unaccomplished, and uninteresting relatives.

Anne talks with Mr. Elliot and finds he agrees with Sir Walter that the acquaintance with Lady Dalrymple should be pursued. Mr. Elliot believes that in a relatively small city like Bath, one's social circle is extremely important. He implies to Anne that he also worries about his uncle's connection to Mrs. Clay. He thinks such a potential attachment dangerous and he hopes to do everything possible to draw Sir Walter's attentions elsewhere.

Analysis

Here, Austen introduces the issue of place, meaning one's position both geographically and in society. The two are highly connected. Mr. Elliot points out that Sir Walter's family may be relatively insignificant in London due to their 'present, quiet style of living,' but in Bath they are able to move within prominent social circles. Anne takes offense to the idea that one's social worth is dependent on one's location. She has a more nuanced and complex vision of social standing, in which value is placed not only on birth and wealth, but on one's accomplishments, manners, and interests. In Somersetshire, the Elliot family is considered the very best; here in Bath, they could be understood to be socially beneath their cousins, the Dalrymples. Anne has pride, and she is offended at the thought that such unaccomplished and uninteresting people could be ranked above her.

Austen does not believe that the class system should be discarded. Anne is extremely conscious of class, which explains the offense she takes at the prospect of having Mrs. Clay for her step-mother. Anne is unaccustomed to being thought beneath anyone, and in some ways, she has more pride than her father and sister. She cannot bear the thought that such a respected, landed family such as hers must live in rented rooms in a city, while their home is inhabited by others. Anne is further dismayed at the small degree to which her father and sister seem to be upset by this. Austen is expressing that a certain amount of pride can be a good thing, if it is based upon true merit and not false appearances.

Summary

Chapter 17

Anne hears that an old school friend of hers, Miss Hamilton now Mrs. Smith, is in Bath. After school, Mrs. Smith had married a rich man, but he was extravagant. Two years ago, he had died, leaving her a widow and deeply in debt. Soon afterwards, she contracted rheumatic fever and was crippled by her illness. Anne decides that she must go visit her old friend, who is now almost entirely excluded from society.

When she visits Mrs. Smith, she finds that her friend's good spirits and good manners have not left her, though she is now in an awful situation. Mrs. Smith makes a living by selling her needlework to the wealthier women of Bath. They re-establish their friendship and Anne promises to visit often.

One night, the Elliots receive an invitation to the Dalrymples' place, and Anne tells her family she must decline it because she has an engagement to visit Mrs. Smith. Sir Walter is horrified that Anne should be visiting such a poor neighborhood and is appalled that she chooses to associate with someone so much lower in consequence than herself.

The dinner party allows Mr. Elliot and Lady Russell to talk. Mr. Elliot expresses his high regard for Anne's character, and Lady Russell becomes convinced that he means to court Anne and not Elizabeth. This decision pleases Lady Russell immensely, as she would love to see Anne, her favorite, holding her mother's place as Lady Elliot of Kellynch Hall. She thinks Anne is just like her mother in disposition and virtue. Though Anne loves the idea of becoming the future Lady Elliot, she remains suspicious of Mr. Elliot's motives and character. She finds him agreeable, but neither warm nor open.

Chapter 18

A letter arrives for Anne from Mary, and Anne is pleased to learn that the Crofts have come to Bath. Mary's letter also brings Anne the news that Louisa Musgrove has become engaged to Captain Benwick. To everyone's surprise, they have fallen in love while Louisa was recovering at the Harvilles' home. Mary says that Benwick is not a good match for Louisa, but Mary considers it much better than marrying among the Hayters.

Anne is entirely pleased by this news, both because she thinks it very healthy for Captain Benwick to be attached to a young woman, and because this means that Captain Wentworth is once again free. Although she thinks their temperaments very different (Louisa is high-spirited and joyous; Captain Benwick more pensive and thoughtful), she is happy that they have found love.

With the Crofts in Bath, Anne looks forward to seeing them frequently. One morning, she has the good fortune to meet the Admiral while walking. He seems happy to see her and he relates to her his knowledge of the engagement between Captain Benwick and Louisa. He tells her that he and Mrs. Croft are surprised because they expected Louisa to marry their brother, Captain Frederick Wentworth. He tells her that Frederick does not seem to be upset over the news of the engagement. He suggests that Captain Wentworth come to Bath, as there are many young, available women here for him to court.

Analysis

Austen's novels are famous for their use of irony. Irony is hiding what is actually the case, not in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. Austen uses irony to hint at deeper

observations of social life and customs. It is ironic that Captain Benwick proposes to Louisa because they are such an unlikely match. Yet their engagement suggests Austen's observation of different kinds of marriages in society. Austen shows that not every couple is like Anne and Captain Wentworth, entirely suited in temperament. Instead, some people marry because they happen to find something close to what they are looking for at a certain point in their life. Both Captain Benwick and Louisa are in somewhat needy and desperate situations. Benwick is recovering from the death of his fiancée, and Louisa is recovering from her fall. Although Austen finds their match amusing, she does not condemn a match made under such conditions. Rather, her irony serves to highlight her skepticism of true love. The kind of connection which Anne and Wentworth have is rare indeed, and the practical side of this novel emphasizes the good fortune of finding someone from a corresponding social class who will make you tolerably happy. Love is not merely a matter of shared passion, but of shared learning.

Mrs. Smith's sad situation once again highlights the danger women must face in a society where they have increased social mobility. Mrs. Smith has fallen drastically in her rank and consequence since her marriage and the subsequent death of her husband. Her situation illustrates the potential cruelty of such a strongly class-based society. Not only is Mrs. Smith poor and crippled, she is relatively friendless. Few will visit her in her meager lodgings. Anne's visit is a testament to her own personal character, independence of mind, and willingness to look past social rank.

Summary

Chapter 19

Captain Wentworth arrives in Bath and Anne sees him the very next day when she is out walking. She is with Elizabeth, Mrs. Clay, and Mr. Elliot in town when it starts to rain. Mr. Elliot asks Lady Dalrymple if she will escort the ladies home in her carriage. Lady Dalrymple agrees but since she only has room for two of them, Anne decides to walk home with Mr. Elliot. They meet Captain Wentworth while in a store waiting for Lady Dalrymple's carriage.

Captain Wentworth is shocked to see her. He speaks to Anne and they talk of the Musgroves. Elizabeth would not acknowledge Captain Wentworth, as she thought him beneath her; this pains Anne. Elizabeth and Mrs. Clay leave to enter the carriage. On finding that there is no room for Anne, Captain Wentworth offers her his services and his umbrella. But Mr. Elliot at that moment returns to take Anne by the arm and whisk her out of the store. The people who accompany Captain Wentworth guess that there is something between Mr. Elliot and Anne.

The next morning, Anne is walking with Lady Russell when they see Captain Wentworth on the opposite side of the street. Though she knows that Lady Russell must see him, she makes no comment.

Anne grows tired of the private parties she must always attend with her family's friends, but she looks forward to an upcoming concert for the benefit of one of Lady Dalrymple's friends. Captain Wentworth is sure to be at this concert. She tells Mrs. Smith about the upcoming concert and Mrs. Smith makes a cryptic remark that she thinks she may not have many more visits from Anne.

Chapter 20

The Elliot family goes to the concert, which all the important people in Bath will attend. Captain Wentworth enters, and Anne is pleased that her father and Elizabeth choose to acknowledge him. Wentworth stops to talk with Anne, compliments her on her level-headedness in Lyme, and

expresses his good wishes for Louisa and Captain Benwick. He also tells Anne that he has some doubts about their marriage, Louisa being not nearly intellectual enough for Benwick. He is surprised that Benwick has been able to get over the death of his first love, Fanny Harville, so quickly.

Anne is very happy after her conversation with Captain Wentworth, but she is unable to sit near him during the concert. Instead, she sits next to Mr. Elliot and is asked by him to translate the Italian in their program. He compliments her excessively, hints that he was told of her fine character before he met her, and expresses his hope that her name may never change. He implies a marriage between himself and Anne. Although she is surprised, Anne is thinking instead of Captain Wentworth and how to get near enough to talk to him again. He is distant and will not come over to talk with her.

During the intermission, Anne changes seats, moving herself away from Mr. Elliot and closer to Captain Wentworth. She finally gets close enough to speak to him when Mr. Elliot once again interrupts and asks her to help him with a translation of Italian. Politeness forces her to go with him. After she is done, Captain Wentworth rushes up to Anne to bid her goodnight and let her know that he is leaving the concert. She implores him to stay, but he refuses. Anne recognizes that Captain Wentworth must be jealous of Mr. Elliot.

Analysis

In these chapters, misunderstanding and bad timing thwart the relationship between Anne and Captain Wentworth. Although both seek to ascertain the feelings and affections of the other, they are confused by the appearance of a third party, Mr. Elliot, who has his own personal motives. This part of the novel leads toward climax. Captain Wentworth is now free of all attachments, and both he and Anne are at the same place at the same time. Though they seek the same goal, they are uncertain whether obstacles such as Anne's family or Mr. Elliot will keep them from reaching happiness. The confusion and awkwardness that fill these chapters serve a larger narrative purpose; they heighten the tension leading up to the climax of the novel.

The description of the relationship By keeping the feelings between The knowledge that Captain Wentworth and Anne are in love with each other must be released slowly. Though the reader knows what both characters are feeling, it is a testament to Austen's high value on civility that she does not make her characters passionately express their feelings. The tension is deep, but the characters' restraint of emotion is an admirable, if frustrating quality. Austen does not trust unbridled passion; she sees something improper and self-absorbed in public declarations of love. Captain Wentworth's passion must unfold gradually and with prudence, in a manner in accordance with social custom, if it is to be trusted and respected.

Summary

Chapter 21

The next morning, Anne goes to visit Mrs. Smith and tell her all about the concert. Mrs. Smith, having already heard a version of last night's events from one of the maids, is anxious to hear Anne's description as well. Mrs. Smith believes Anne to be in love with Mr. Elliot and she asks Anne if he has ever mentioned her in conversation. Anne tries to set Mrs. Smith straight; she reassures her that she has no interest at all in marrying her cousin. Mrs. Smith thinks that because their marriage would be so appropriate, everyone must be persuading Anne towards that end.

Mrs. Smith tells Anne the story of her acquaintance with Mr. Elliot. She considers him to be a man "without a heart or a conscience...a cold-blooded being." In the past, he had been the good friend of her late husband, and Mrs. Smith had accepted him as a friend of her own. They had often assisted

him when he was having financial trouble. Mr. Elliot married entirely for money, dismissing the honor of marriage to Elizabeth in favor of wealth and independence. Mrs. Smith often heard him say that if he could sell his baronetcy, anyone could have it for fifty pounds. She shows Anne a letter written by Mr. Elliot in which he promises to destroy Kellynch or sell it for as much money as he can get. After his marriage to a wealthy, but untitled woman, he encouraged Mr. Smith to live extravagantly and go into great debt. He brought the Smiths to financial ruin and refused to help them. Upon Mr. Smith's death, Mr. Elliot, the executor of his will, refused to act, thereby leaving all the debts and difficulties onto his grieving widow.

Mrs. Smith continues to tell Anne of Mr. Elliot's current plans, which she hears through the servants' gossip. Mr. Elliot, having long had all the money he could want, now desires beyond all else, to become baronet. When he heard that it was a distinct possibility that Sir Walter might remarry, he was outraged. If Sir Walter was to have a son with Mrs. Clay, that child and not Mr. Elliot, would be the rightful heir to Kellynch. Mr. Elliot traveled to Bath and rejoined the family in an effort to keep Mrs. Clay away from Sir Walter, and to protect his future baronetcy. When he met Anne, his motives doubled; he desires that it be written into their marriage contract that Sir Walter never re-marry.

Anne is saddened and upset by all this news about her cousin. She realizes what a cunning and manipulative man he actually is, but she is glad to have this information so that she can warn and protect her family. She decides to tell everything to Lady Russell as soon as possible.

Chapter 22

That evening Mr. Elliot tries to flatter and entertain Anne, but to no avail. He finds she is not at all interested in him tonight. He announces that he is leaving Bath for a few days and will return on Saturday.

The next morning, Anne intends to go visit Lady Russell, but she is met by Charles and Mary Musgrove, surprise visitors. They are warmly welcomed. Mary brings the news that some of the Musgrove family has come to Bath: Mrs. Musgrove, Henrietta, Mary, Charles, and Captain Harville. Henrietta has come to shop for wedding clothes. It is settled that she will soon marry Charles Hayter. Anne remarks that it is wonderful to have such nice parents who care more about their child's happiness than propriety.

Anne goes to visit the Musgroves where they are staying, and she once again relishes the happiness of their bustling company. While they are there, Mary looks out the window and notices Mr. Elliot talking to Mrs. Clay on the street outside. Anne looks and confirms that it is them.

Mary and Charles get into an argument about the plans for that night. Charles has got a box for them all to see a play, but Mary thinks they must go to her father's evening party; she feels it is vital that they be introduced to the Dalrymples. She is also very curious to meet Mr. Elliot, her father's heir. Anne takes this opportunity to express that she would much rather see a play than spend time with Mr. Elliot. Captain Wentworth takes note of this. After a good deal of arguing, Charles and Mary finally decide to attend the evening party.

Sir Walter and Elizabeth enter the room briefly to extend the invitation to their party to all the Musgroves. They invite Captain Wentworth as well. The Elliots return to their home to prepare for tomorrow's party.

Analysis

In these chapters, deception is discovered as Anne finds out Mr. Elliot's true motivations behind all his attentions to her family. In a twist of dramatic irony, Mrs. Smith is the one to inform Anne of her

cousin's cold-heartedness and social ambition. Anne acknowledges that she would never have this important information were it not for her own feelings that friendship must trump the value of social appearances; if Anne had not chosen to visit Mrs. Smith, she would not have known about Mr. Elliot's bad character. Austen employs dramatic irony to express a certain social justice; the crippled and impoverished Mrs. Smith is capable of ruining the plans of the wealthy Mr. Elliot.

These passages allow Austen to iron out, for her reader, the rules and limitations of social ambition in the world of *Persuasion*. The novel *critiques* aristocratic claims to distinction by painting a ridiculous caricature of Sir Walter and Elizabeth, but it *condemns* Mr. Elliot's more determined plan to rise in social consequence. In this world, there are rules to social mobility. It is acceptable that one should consider birth and fortune when choosing a marriage partner; Austen concedes that it is only prudent to do so. It is also acceptable, if humiliating, to seek company with one's social superiors. But it is entirely unacceptable to lie, manipulate, and feign emotion in order to gain a title. Mr. Elliot went wrong in failing to behave like a gentleman. He was callous and cold to Mrs. Smith, actions that Anne cannot forgive. Furthermore, Mr. Elliot openly rejected the rules and values of his class and station; by writing all those years ago that he cared neither for his family nor his title. The aristocracy is based upon the core beliefs of family and tradition; by rejecting these, Mr. Elliot proves himself unworthy to hold the title of baronet.

Summary

Chapter 23

The next morning, Anne leaves to join the Musgroves, Captain Harville, Captain Wentworth, and Mrs. Croft for the day. They are in a parlor room, and Anne talks to Captain Harville by the window. Captain Wentworth is not far off, and is writing a letter. Anne and Captain Harville discuss the constancy of love. Anne argues that women are the more constant and faithful gender; she says that women love longest, even "when existence or when hope is gone." Captain Harville disagrees; he asserts that men remember their women long after the women have moved on. They agree to disagree. Captain Wentworth overhears the entire conversation.

Having finished his letter, Captain Wentworth slips a note to Anne, and then he and Captain Harville leave to mail the letter. Anne reads Wentworth's note. In it, he declares his constancy and his undying love for her. Anne is overcome with emotion. She exclaims that she is not feeling well and must go home at once. Though she hopes to walk alone, Charles insists on walking with her. In the street, they see Captain Wentworth, and Charles suggests that he accompany Anne the rest of the way home.

Finally alone, Anne tells Captain Wentworth how much she has loved him for this long time. Though people walk the streets around them, they are only conscious of each other. They are 'exquisitely happy' and relieved. Captain Wentworth asserts that he has never loved anyone but Anne. Although he flirted with Louisa, he never meant to be engaged to her. When he found out that others thought him promised to her, he was distraught. He could not have been more pleased when, upon getting better, she chose to marry Captain Benwick.

Captain Wentworth tells Anne how horrible it was to be at the concert, knowing that everyone who had influence over her must persuade her to marry Mr. Elliot. Anne explains that eight years ago, she yielded to duty, but that in "marrying a man indifferent to [her],...all duty would be violated." They part for the afternoon, each overwhelmingly happy.

That night, at the Elliots' card party, Anne talks to Captain Wentworth again. She says that eight years ago, Lady Russell poorly advised her to reject him, but she believes she was right to follow that advice. She reasons that "a strong sense of duty is no bad part of a woman's portion." Captain Wentworth blames himself for the long years of separation. Learning that she would have said yes, he wishes that he had asked her to marry him again six years ago. He concludes that he was too proud, and in finally marrying her will be happier than he deserves.

Chapter 24

This chapter is a complete summary by the narrator. Anne and Captain Wentworth announce their engagement. Neither Elizabeth nor Sir Walter openly object. With a very large fortune, Captain Wentworth is now worthy to propose to the daughter of an indebted baronet. Lady Russell is initially upset, but her first desire is to see Anne happy, so she eventually gets over her hurt feelings. She and Captain Wentworth grow fond of each other.

Mr. Elliot is shocked and withdraws from Bath. There seems to be no man of any consequence who is a prospective husband for Elizabeth. Mrs. Clay leaves Bath and it is rumored that she is under the protection of Mr. Elliot. He had been making advances to her all along, so that she would not marry Sir Walter. She gives up all hopes of marrying Sir Walter, but the narrator suggests that she may someday be made the wife of Sir William Elliot.

Captain Wentworth helps Mrs. Smith to get some of her husband's money back and she stays a close friend of Anne's.

Anne and Captain Wentworth are utterly happy. The narrator ends with a few sentences on the Navy, a profession "which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance."

Analysis

Like many of Jane Austen's novels, *Persuasion* ends with a happy marriage. Anne and Captain Wentworth renew their love for each other and announce their engagement. Wentworth, who is now significantly richer than Sir Walter, is considered worthy enough to marry Anne. The Navy has given him the freedom of making a large fortune and of moving up substantially in society. This possibility for social mobility is what the narrator refers to in the closing line of the novel as the Navy's "domestic virtue." His position in the Navy allows Captain Wentworth to be considered deserving of Anne Elliot.

However, Captain Wentworth is not the only character whose social standing has changed. The Elliot family has been humbled by Sir Walter's significant debt. Although they were once an extremely wealthy family with a country estate, the Elliots are forced to rent their house and live more modestly. Although they retain their titles and high birth, wealth is an important factor in gauging social consequence. This fact is not lost on Sir Walter.

Anne concludes that she was right to be persuaded eight years ago. This conclusion implies that she accepts a traditional interpretation of duty; she has an obligation to follow the advice of her family and form an appropriate match. For Anne, marriage is a subordination of the self to the social order. What allows Anne to marry Captain Wentworth eight years later is not that her ideas of duty have changed; it is the social order itself that is altered. The accepted social mobility of Naval officers is what allows Anne and Captain Wentworth to finally find happiness.

Important Quotations Explained

Yes; it is in two points offensive to me; I have two strong grounds of objection to it. First, as a means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of; and secondly, as it cuts up a man's youth and vigour most horribly.

[Explanation for Quotation 1 >>](#)

These lines are spoken by Sir Walter Elliot in Chapter Three. He is explaining to his family and friends why he objects to the Navy and wishes that none of his relatives will ever join it. Sir Walter highly values appearance and attractiveness, and so naturally he dislikes the way the sun and sea air can weather a face and "cut up a man's youth." Sir Walter truly objects to the Navy because it functions as a means of social ascension. The Navy allows men who are dedicated and hard-working to build a fortune and to gain social status. His objection is not only to the Navy, but to increasing social mobility in society.

Here is a nut. To exemplify, a beautiful glossy nut, which, blessed with original strength, has outlived all the storms of autumn. Not a puncture, not a weak spot anywhere. This nut ... while so many of its brethren have fallen and been trodden under foot, is still in possession of all the happiness that a hazel-nut can be supposed capable of.

[Explanation for Quotation 2 >>](#)

These lines, from Chapter Ten, are spoken by Captain Wentworth to Louisa Musgrove, and Anne Elliot overhears them. Captain Wentworth is touching on a topic that is very close to his heart: the value of constancy and strength of character. This beautiful nut has weathered the storms and stayed on the tree, unlike the others. Wentworth uses this nut as an illustration of the importance of deciveness and firmness in one's mind. The reader can clearly connect this to Wentworth's past disappointment in love; he believes that Anne Elliot broke her engagement with him because she was not strong enough to withstand the disapproval of a few people. Though she promised him her love, she reneged on her word.

Austen's characteristic irony is an important part of this passage. Captain Wentworth considers "all the happiness that a hazel-nut can be supposed capable of." By its very ridiculousness, this final line throws Wentworth's illustration into question. At this point in the novel, it is still unclear whether firmness of character does increase happiness.

And indeed, Mary, I cannot wonder at your husband. Nursing does not belong to a man, it is not his province. A sick child is always the mother's property, her own feelings generally make it so.

[Explanation for Quotation 3 >>](#)

This quote in Chapter Seven is said by Anne to her sister Mary when discussing Charles's desire to go out to dinner and leave his sick child to be cared for at home. Anne suggests what the correct motherly feelings and actions should be. Mary does not have a mother's protective instinct, and would prefer to leave her child to the care of someone else. Anne subtly disapproves of such unmotherly behavior. Anne also reinforces a belief in the idea that the public domain is the responsibility of the male and the domestic domain is the responsibility of the female. Anne believes that nursing is a woman's job, and infers that Mary should therefore not be upset if her husband refuses to do it.

If I was wrong in yielding to persuasion once, remember that it was to persuasion exerted on the side of safety, not of risk. When I yielded, I thought it was to duty; but no duty could be called in aid here. In marrying a man indifferent to me, all risk would have been incurred and all duty violated.

[Explanation for Quotation 4 >>](#)

Anne makes this statement to Captain Wentworth in Chapter 23. She explains to him the reason behind her initial decision, eight years ago, to break their engagement. The various uses of persuasion is one of the main themes of the novel, but in this passage Anne rationally justifies its use. She concludes that it was correct of her to yield to persuasion by Lady Russell because she had a duty to her rank and to "safety." What is notable about this passage is the cool rationality which Anne employs. Though Austen writes about marriages, her novels are not entirely about "romance." Passion must be tempered by reason and practicality if a marriage is to be successful.

His profession was all that could ever make her friends wish that tenderness less; the dread of a future war all that could dim her sunshine. She gloried in being a sailor's wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance.

[Explanation for Quotation 5 >>](#)

In these final lines of the novel, Austen makes a broad observation regarding the role of the Navy in society. She acknowledges that Anne's future may not be entirely happy; being married to a Naval officer means worrying constantly about the prospect of war and long-term separation. In this period of English history, wars and Naval skirmishes occurred with alarming frequency. Though *Persuasion* might include characters who are officers in the Navy, it never describes them in their professional capacity. Their rank is only important for the degree of esteem with which they are regarded by civilians. Austen is conscious of this significant exclusion and her final line serves as a recognition of it. The Navy, as an institution, does many good things for England; it defends the country, maintains the colonies, functions as a means of social mobility, and instructs its rank on English values. This passage is Austen's way of paying respect to the Navy; it is an honorable means to rise in society through hard work and good fortune.

Key Facts

FULL TITLE · *Persuasion*

AUTHOR · Jane Austen

TYPE OF WORK · Novel

GENRE · Novel of manners. This type of novel is not about the education or growth of one particular individual, but is instead a story of how a few central characters interact within society, navigating the rules and structures which govern their lives.

LANGUAGE · English

TIME AND PLACE WRITTEN · Austen wrote *Persuasion* in 1816, while she was very ill, before her death at her home in Chawton, a village fifty-two miles southwest of London.

DATE OF FIRST PUBLICATION · 1818

PUBLISHER · John Murray

NARRATOR · An unknown, omniscient narrator, who makes judgments similar to those Anne Elliot might make

CLIMAX · The major climax occurs when Captain Wentworth finally reveals his feelings to Anne in a letter. She finds him and immediately responds that his love is requited; the lesser climax is the cool, but favourable reception of Captain Wentworth by Anne's family.

PROTAGONIST · Anne Elliot

ANTAGONIST · There is no one antagonist who is in direct opposition to Anne Elliot; Rather Anne must face the social class system which considers birth an essential component to whether a match is suitable; She also must navigate the rules of propriety and manners, which means that she may only hint at her feelings while Captain Wentworth must be first to declare love

SETTING (TIME) · 1814–1815

SETTING (PLACE) · Kellynch Hall, Uppercross Manor, Lyme, and Bath. The setting follows Anne Elliot's movements from the country to Lyme to finally joining her father and sister in Bath.

POINT OF VIEW · Free indirect discourse

FALLING ACTION · The Elliot family and Lady Russell no longer hold an objection to the match of Anne and Wentworth; Mr. Elliot and Mrs. Clay withdraw their designs on Sir Walter's fortune; Captain Wentworth helps Mrs. Smith to regain some of her late husband's money

TENSE · Immediate past, real-time narration

FORESHADOWING · In some ways, the relationship of Admiral and Mrs. Croft foreshadows the attached and more equitable relationship which Anne and Captain Wentworth will have. The meeting of Mrs. Clay and Mr. Elliot foreshadowed the discovery of their deceptive collusion.

TONE · Slightly satirical and subtly subversive. The narrator follows earnestly the plight of Anne Elliot, but mocks the pretensions and vanity of her titled upper- class family.

THEMES · Class rigidity and social mobility; Persuasion; Silly parents; Separate Spheres; the Changing Ideal of the Gentleman

MOTIFS · Walks; marriage

Study Questions and Essay Topics

-Does *Persuasion* challenge or defend the status of class structure in early nineteenth century British society? How?

[Answer for Study Question 1 >>](#)

Austen challenges the class structure of her society. She employs irony and satire to poke fun at people in positions of high social consequence. Sir Walter is a perfect example of a caricature of a titled landowner. Austen's treatment of him is subtly subversive; by making his vanity a joke, she lessens the grandeur and respect of his position. Austen also treats the Navy favorably. As a means of social mobility which undercuts the traditional landed gentry system, the Navy is a relatively progressive institution. This novel supports the 'domestic virtues' of the Navy, and therefore may be thought to challenge existing ideas of class.

On the other hand, *Persuasion* does defend the relatively rigid class structure in some ways. Anne Elliot strongly dislikes Mrs. Clay, and is averse to any marriage between her father and a woman of a lower class. Anne finally concludes that she was right to allow herself to be persuaded and that she ought to have upheld her class duty. Anne's marriage to Captain Wentworth of course does not disrupt the class system. Wentworth has risen in wealth and consequence during the eight years he has been at sea. Anne's marriage at the end of the novel is perfectly suitable, and does not challenge the class system.

-What is the significance of the title "Persuasion"? How are the novel's characters positively and negatively affected by persuasion in the story?

[Answer for Study Question 2 >>](#)

Anne Elliot is clearly the foremost example of one who is persuaded. Eight years before the novel begins, Lady Russell persuaded Anne not to marry Captain Wentworth. This leads the Captain to negatively judge Anne's firmness of mind and strength of character. But Anne does not agree that persuasion negatively affected her. Although she disagrees with the content of Lady Russell's advice, she thinks it was right to be persuaded. A sound mind, she reasons, pays heed to duty and to the judgment of others.

In contrast, Louisa Musgrove is an example of someone who could not be persuaded. Try as he might, Captain Wentworth could not get Louisa to keep from jumping off the wall. While he initially praises Louisa's strong character, Captain Wentworth later realizes that there is a big difference between a constant disposition and a stubborn mind. In the end, Austen allows the reader to judge whether persuasion is a positive or negative force.

[Suggested Essay Topics](#)

What is the role of parents in *Persuasion*? What kinds of examples do they set for their own children?

Is *Persuasion* a romantic novel? Why or why not?

What rhetorical and narrative techniques does Austen employ in her novel? How do they affect the novel's overall narration?

Which characters change throughout the course of the novel? Which ones remain static? What are the larger implications for this personal growth or stagnation?

Why is it so important to keep Kellynch within the Elliot family? How important is Kellynch to the different members of the family?

Quiz

In which town does the Elliot family plan to retrench?

- ☐ (A) Lyme
- ☐ (B) Kellynch
- ☐ (C) Bath
- ☐ (D) Oxford

Of the Elliot daughters, which is Lady Russell's favorite?

- ☐ (A) Mary
- ☐ (B) Anne
- ☐ (C) Mrs. Clay
- ☐ (D) Elizabeth

Why does Sir Walter object to ever having any of his own relatives join the Navy?

- ☐ (A) "it brings persons of obscure birth into undue distinction"
- ☐ (B) "it causes one to collect enemies"
- ☐ (C) "it impedes a man from finding a wife"
- ☐ (D) "it causes seasickness"

Who convinced Anne to break her engagement with Captain Wentworth in the summer of 1806?

- ☐ (A) Elizabeth
- ☐ (B) Lady Russell
- ☐ (C) Admiral Croft
- ☐ (D) Fanny Harville

Why does Anne worry about her family bringing Mrs. Clay to Bath?

- ☐ (A) She thinks Mrs. Clay ugly and therefore unworthy to travel with Elliots
- ☐ (B) She thinks Mrs. Clay is needed at home
- ☐ (C) She hopes Mrs. Clay will travel to Lyme
- ☐ (D) She thinks Mrs. Clay might have romantic designs on Sir Walter

Which couple does Anne look to as an example of a happy marriage?

- ☐ (A) Charles and Mary Musgrove
- ☐ (B) Admiral and Mrs. Croft
- ☐ (C) Her own parents, Sir Walter and the late Lady Elliot
- ☐ (D) Captain and Mrs. Harville

Why does Mrs. Musgrove feel a special connection to Captain Wentworth?

- ☐ (A) He once took her on a long ocean voyage
- ☐ (B) He has lived in Somersetshire for a very long time
- ☐ (C) He reminds her of her own brother
- ☐ (D) He was the commander in charge of her late son, Dick

When the Crofts are in a carriage, who drives?

- ☐ (A) Admiral Croft
- ☐ (B) They share the driving and help each other steer
- ☐ (C) Mrs. Croft
- ☐ (D) Their servant, Jeeves

Who jumps off the wall in Lyme and gets seriously injured?

- ☐ (A) Anne Elliot
- ☐ (B) Henrietta Musgrove
- ☐ (C) Louisa Musgrove
- ☐ (D) Captain Benwick

When Anne arrives in Bath, which old friend does she visit?

- ☐ (A) Mrs. Smith
- ☐ (B) Mr. Elliot
- ☐ (C) Captain Harville
- ☐ (D) Mrs. Clay

What does Anne discover after her meeting with Mrs. Smith?

- ☐ (A) That Mr. Elliot is not really Sir Walter's heir
- ☐ (B) That her old boarding school has gone co-ed
- ☐ (C) That Mr. Elliot put Mrs. Smith into debt and refused to help her after her husband passed away
- ☒ (D) That Mrs. Clay is stealing from the Elliots